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Security Council

Fifty-first Year

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Tuesday, 28 May 1996, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Qin Huasun	(China)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Nkgowe
	Chile	Mr. Somavia
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Germany	Mr. Henze
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Queta
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Wisnumurti
	Italy	Mr. Fulci
	Poland	Mr. Wlosowicz
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Gnehm

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (S/1996/362)

96-85719 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (S/1996/362)

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Djibouti, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Bull (Liberia) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Lamamra (Algeria), Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Mr. Wilmot (Ghana), Mr. Gambari (Nigeria), Mr. Kasanda (Zambia) and Mr. Mapuranga (Zimbabwe) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, document S/1996/362.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to the following other documents: S/1996/353, letter dated 15 May 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the text of a declaration by the European Union on Liberia's boat people; and S/1996/377, letter dated 17 May 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

The first speaker is the representative of Liberia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Bull (Liberia): I am pleased to see you ably conducting the affairs of the Council for the month of May, Mr. President. And my delegation is particularly heartened by the attention given to the Liberian crisis, as the international community — the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations — endeavour to find a peaceful negotiated settlement.

Allow me to extend, on behalf of the Liberian people, our abiding appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his compassion and empathy, which he has demonstrated towards their suffering wrought by over six years of war. Indeed, his good judgement is reflected in his thoughtful recommendations to the Security Council, particularly that the United Nations should remain engaged in Liberia through the continuing presence in the country of its Observer Mission, the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). The message, in my delegation's view, is clear. The Security Council and the international community must remain seized of the Liberian crisis until a durable solution is found.

In this connection, we welcome, with appreciation, the seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on UNOMIL, document S/1996/362 of 21 May 1996, which gives an account of the eruption of fighting in Monrovia on 6 April and proposes steps to be taken in support of the Abuja Agreement, now under serious strain.

Since the eruption of the Liberian civil war in December 1989, the Liberian people have traversed a tortuous path to seek a settlement through political accommodation and national reconciliation. It is to be recalled that prior to the intervention of the Economic Community of West African States the United Nations was requested to undertake mediation of the crisis. At that time the response was that the United Nations was prohibited by its Charter from intervening in matters that were basically within the domestic jurisdiction of a Member State. As the war degenerated into wanton destruction of life and property and forced the mass exodus of helpless civilians to sanctuary in neighbouring countries, ECOWAS created the Standing Mediation Committee, which was mandated to mediate the conflict.

The ECOWAS peace plan which ensued called for an immediate cease-fire, the establishment of the cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the formation of an Interim Government of National Unity to include

the warring factions, political parties and various interest groups and the holding of free and fair elections within one year. In August 1990, ECOMOG was dispatched to Liberia to effect the cease-fire and provide a security blanket for Monrovia, where the Interim Government was subsequently based to administer the affairs of the country and organize plans for elections and the return to civilian democratic rule. Nevertheless, these interim political arrangements did not seem to some of the warring parties to sufficiently address their concerns. Consequently, the military stand-off between the warring factions resulted in a stalemate in the peace process. Numerous efforts were made subsequently to revive the peace process.

Through joint diplomatic initiatives of the United Nations, the OAU and ECOWAS, an agreement between the warring factions and the Interim Government was signed at Geneva in July 1993 it called, *inter alia*, for a collective executive leadership or a Council of State composed of representatives from the three warring factions and two from civilian society. Other supportive mechanisms - an expanded ECOMOG, with additional troops drawn from non-ECOWAS States, and a United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia established by the Security Council — were designed to further advance the peace process. The agreement was signed by all of the parties at Cotonou, Benin, on 25 July 1993.

The Cotonou Agreement produced the first Council of State of the Liberian National Transitional Government, which was installed in 1994. Delays in promised assistance to an expanded ECOMOG, coupled with the unwillingness of the warring parties to honour the understanding reached, hampered the full implementation of the Cotonou Agreement.

As the peace process suffered further setbacks, negotiations were undertaken by the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Jerry J. Rawlings of the Republic of Ghana. His efforts led to the signing of the Akosombo Agreement. At issue was the fact that the Agreement did not adequately address the key question of disarmament, but, rather, called for the reconfiguration of the Council of State. The restructured Council of State, by including more military and factional leaders, had the effect of sidelining the civilian members. This caused an outcry among Liberians at home and abroad that the Akosombo Agreement was an attempt to appease the factional leaders.

The Accra Agreement, signed on 21 December 1994, sought to clarify the Akosombo Agreement, but it failed to settle the issue of the composition of the Council of State.

It was due to this stalemate that the Abuja meeting was convened. The Abuja Agreement finally addressed the composition of the Council of State, which was now to include a civilian Chairman, the heads of the three main warring factions and two other civilians, thus balancing the representation. The installation of the Council of State on 1 September 1995 raised the hopes of the Liberian people and the international community that the peace process had a better chance of succeeding, after several years of fratricidal war which had resulted in the injury or death of over 300,000 people, the devastation of the economy and the fragile infrastructure, the forced departure from the country of nearly a million Liberians and the internal displacement of the remaining population.

I have revisited the early beginnings of the quest for peace in Liberia principally to draw attention to the fact that Liberians have made strenuous, painstaking efforts to achieve peace and rid the country of the siege mentality. Regrettably, the events which preceded the eruption of the present hostilities have proved that the reverse has happened. Today, Liberia appears to be no closer to peace than it was when the war commenced in December 1989. The Abuja Agreement, which called for the disarmament and demobilization of combatants and their reintegration into civil society, the repatriation of Liberian refugees and the holding of free and fair elections in August 1996 under international supervision, remains largely unimplemented.

The resumption of hostilities on 6 April, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General, is, unfortunately, continuing. The cease-fire and other measures called for by the ECOWAS ministerial meeting of the Committee of Nine held in Accra on 7 and 8 May 1996 have not been honoured. As a result, there is a breakdown of law and order, and the Council of State is unable to function, since some of its members have left the country and have not returned home because their safety cannot be guaranteed. The same is true for most of the personnel of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

The plight of the Liberian people remains even more precarious, for they continue to be the innocent victims of the war, under siege at home and, regrettably, scorned abroad. The recent report of Liberians fleeing the country, which received widespread international media attention, is a sad commentary on the country's present state of affairs.

Liberia — a country which for over 130 years enjoyed peace and stability as a free, sovereign and independent State and, in the words of one African leader, served as

"a beacon of hope to the rest of colonized Africa that Africans are capable of self-governance" —

appears as a pariah nation whose citizens, fleeing a war in chartered vessels, had to travel from port to port while appeals were made that countries should honour their international legal obligation to grant asylum to Liberians seeking refuge from war, as was their unfortunate plight.

Permit me to register the heartfelt appreciation of the Liberian people to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his collaborators, to the Secretary-General of the OAU and to those Governments, particularly those of the European Community and the United States, and governmental and non-governmental organizations which appealed for and urged the acceptance of the refugees and provided assistance for their immediate resettlement. We also thank the Governments which agreed to host the recent refugees.

Liberians bemoan the fact that their compatriots entrusted to lead the country out of the fratricidal conflict appear to have become numb to the misery and suffering, the humiliation and mockery before the global audience. In spite of the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council, guns and other weapons of destruction continue to enter the country, thus maintaining the war machine of the warring factions.

In this respect, we urge the Security Council to demand strict compliance with the embargo, and to put in place penalties against all known violators. Moreover, we propose that a sanctions regime be considered against those who aid and abet the war effort of the various warring factions. Here, particular reference is made to those multinational corporations whose untamed propensity for acquiring from the warring factions Liberia's rich mineral deposits and timber far below fair market value without benefit to the Liberian people has helped to prolong the war. No doubt, this unconscionable quest has defined the duplicity and ambivalence in certain quarters regarding the Liberian crisis. Hence, there is the need for a potent, coordinated and harmonized response from the key actors involved in finding an end to the war.

Along with the rest of the international community, Liberians are appealing to the Council of State to end the hostilities in the shortest time. It is recalled that, since the outbreak of the fighting, diplomatic efforts by ECOWAS, the United Nations, the OAU and friendly Governments have sought to nudge the Council of State to move in the direction of cessation of hostilities, the institution of a lasting cease-fire, the withdrawal of the fighting forces from Monrovia and the deployment of ECOMOG in the city, among other goals. The Council of State has given indications that it will abide by the recommendations adopted by the ECOWAS ministerial Committee of Nine.

It is important to observe that a crucial element in this exercise is the strengthening of ECOMOG in order that its mandate under the Abuja Agreement can be carried out. Again, we wish to appeal to the international community for logistical and other support for ECOMOG. While some may have reservations about its viability as a peace-keeping force, it must not be forgotten that ECOMOG took on a responsibility that should have been shouldered by the United Nations. As the United Nations has relied on ECOMOG to provide security to UNOMIL, their respective functions are complementary. UNOMiL and ECOMOG are engaged in a collaborative effort, which will bear fruit only when the requisite support is given.

If the pioneering effort by ECOWAS is to bring to fruition the Charter provision encouraging subregional initiatives in the pacific settlement of disputes, the principal flaw in this provision, in our view, needs to be corrected. The Charter must be amended to ensure that a mechanism is put in place whereby any subregional peace-keeping operation sanctioned by the Security Council is financed by the United Nations.

Regrettably, the ECOWAS countries have threatened that, because of the apparent lack of political will on the part of the leaders of the warring factions and the lack of support from the international community, they may be forced to withdraw from Liberia. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, a decision will be taken by the ECOWAS leaders during their summit, scheduled to be held in early August. In this connection, as the situation in Liberia remains grave in view of the continuation of the fighting, we appeal to the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Jerry Rawlings, again to consider convening the summit by next month.

It is also imperative in view of the growing uncertainty regarding the continuing role of ECOMOG in Liberia that the country not be abandoned. Indeed, it is necessary to take a fresh look at earlier proposals regarding an enhanced role for the United Nations in the peace process. We therefore commend to the Security Council, and endorse, the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's ninth progress report on UNOMIL, particularly his proposal that consideration be given to the deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping force in Liberia. As envisaged by the Secretary General, ECOMOG could be incorporated into the larger force. This arrangement would eliminate the logistical and financial deficiencies which have continued to prevent ECOMOG from carrying out its mandate.

Furthermore, it would ensure the active engagement of the United Nations in the resolution of the Liberian conflict.

Since the outbreak of fighting on 6 April, Liberians throughout the United States have held public demonstrations and have joined in support of the sentiments expressed by the overwhelming majority of Liberians at home and abroad by presenting petitions to the United Nations and to the United States and other friendly Governments. They have demanded an immediate end to the present hostilities and have expressed the view that, in a gun-free environment, Liberians have the political will and the capability to determine their own destiny without fear or intimidation. The Liberian people have called for enabling conditions wherein combatants are disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into civil society and wherein their compatriots residing abroad as refugees can be repatriated and free and fair elections under international supervision can be organized so that everyone, including military leaders, can freely participate in the election of the country's leaders.

Furthermore, they ardently believe that only a democratically elected leadership can ensure their freedom and protection so that they may be able to enjoy their God-given rights to liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as provided for in the Liberian Constitution.

On behalf of the Liberian people, I wish to register our heartfelt thanks to all friendly Governments, donor agencies and humanitarian organizations that continued to render assistance to our people in their hour of need. We also express our regrets for the suffering and losses which they have sustained as a result of the recent resumption of fighting in Liberia.

What has unfolded in Liberia is a human tragedy. When approximately half of a country's population have fled conditions of terror and utter deprivation, in which they fear for their lives, and those remaining in the country are subjected to a continuing military offensive on a nearly daily basis, it is a moral imperative that men of goodwill act to bring relief. It was the same moral imperative that led to the birth of the United Nations and today forms the *raison d'être* of this Organization. As the United Nations has taken decisive actions in other conflict situations which are not dissimilar to that of Liberia, we appeal to the prime movers of the United Nations to employ their finer human instincts to rescue Liberia.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Liberia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Gnehm (United States of America): All of us have watched in horror over the past two months as Liberia has descended from hope into despair. Driven by warlords, Liberia has careened off the road to peace and national reconciliation.

Only a few months ago, we spoke hopefully of the Abuja peace Agreement, of the pioneer role of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as a regional peace-keeping force, and of the important contribution which the United Nations — particularly UNOMIL — was making to the peace process. A transitional Council of State had been installed, and we looked forward to elections in August. We expected Liberia's leaders to complete the remaining steps required under Abuja so that Liberians could finally enjoy the peace they have sought for six long years of civil war. And now the Secretary-General tells us in his report that fighting is seriously jeopardizing the Abuja peace process and has reversed the gains made over the past few months.

As Ambassador Albright observed after her visit to Monrovia in January, the problem in Liberia is a struggle among a few elites for power. In April, these faction leaders demonstrated their commitment to their own interests rather than the good of their people. They reignited the violence; they turned Monrovia from a safe haven into a war zone; they looted the equipment of relief agencies whose only goal was to help the Liberian people. Today fighters openly drive convoys of stolen United Nations and non-governmental organization vehicles around Monrovia. My Government was forced to conduct an emergency evacuation of most of the international community from Liberia. Only a few UNOMIL military observers remain, and the fighting often precludes them from any attempt to carry out the most basic tasks of their mandate. We are outraged by the looting of the United Nations, the non-governmental organizations, the churches, the hospitals and the homes of Liberian people.

What can we do? The answer is not to abandon Liberia. We agree with the views of the Secretary-General in his report — the international community must remain engaged in the efforts to provide relief and to bring peace to the people of Liberia. The regional countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have taken the lead in this respect. The meeting of their Foreign Ministers in Accra on 7 May developed a plan to restart the peace process. This Mechanism for Returning Liberia to the Abuja Agreement provides concrete steps needed to restart the peace process. These steps include restoration of the cease-fire, withdrawal of all fighters from Monrovia,

deployment of ECOMOG throughout the city and restoration of Monrovia as a safe haven.

These steps are necessary if there is to be continued international involvement. This is the message that my Government delivered to the Liberian parties through high-level delegations we sent to Monrovia in the past weeks. We commend the ECOWAS countries for their clarity of purpose and their dedication in the face of tremendous difficulties. We believe that the Security Council must support this important initiative by the countries of the region.

The Accra meeting has given Liberia yet another chance to return to the path of peace. Once again Liberian leaders must decide what course to pursue. We hope they will implement the recent agreements reached in Accra. The Liberian warlords must order their forces to disarm and leave Monrovia in peace. ECOMOG commanders must reassert their control over Monrovia. And the Council of State must begin to act like the Transitional Government that was envisioned in the Abuja Agreement. And by the end of this week the Security Council must decide on the future of UNOMIL.

We are heartened by the continuing commitment of the ECOWAS States and by the steps ECOMOG has taken to deploy throughout Monrovia. We encourage them to continue such efforts. Therefore, we support extending UNOMIL's mandate for three months. We do so because we have not given up hope for Liberia — hope that Liberians will take hold of their destiny and recover their country from the grip of those who only wish to destroy it; hope that law and order can again be brought to Liberia; hope that Liberia can be liberated from war.

Over the next three months my Government will be watching closely to see if any of these hopes are fulfilled. If not, we and the Security Council will have to re-evaluate our approach. And so again we urge all those in Liberia, particularly the faction leaders, to use this time to meet the conditions ECOWAS has laid out and offer their people the chance for peace that they so much deserve.

Mr. Elaraby (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure at the outset, Mr. President, to pay tribute to your ideal conduct of the business of the Council during the current month and to the remarkable performance of the friendly delegation of China under your able leadership.

Liberia was among the first African States to attain independence. It was a member of the League of Nations, and, with Egypt and Ethiopia, it was one of the three African States that signed the San Francisco Charter in 1945. Over the years Liberia continued to play an important role on both the African and international scenes.

We were therefore gravely concerned by the sudden and all-encompassing deterioration of the humanitarian, military and political situation in Liberia at a time when the international community had hoped to add that country to the list of African States that have managed to resolve their internal problems with wisdom and foresight and in a peaceful manner, as was seen in Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, Eritrea and Sierra Leone.

The delegation of Egypt has considered the seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Liberia. It is regrettable that the rapid deterioration of the situation there has been brought about by the lack of genuine political will on the part of the factional leaders to put an end to the mayhem and fighting and to restore stability. Indeed, their rejection of all prior commitments has brought their country to a state of complete constitutional collapse, anarchy and a vacuum of law and order. This situation is untenable; it cannot continue; it is inconsistent with the special meaning of Liberia's name — "the land of liberty" — and with the aspirations of its people to a life of stability under internal national conciliation and external good-neighbourliness and cooperation.

Egypt has followed with great interest the strenuous efforts made by the current chairmanship of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to avert any further deterioration of the situation in Liberia. Egypt welcomed the results of the meeting of ECOWAS Foreign Ministers held at Accra on 7 and 8 May, foremost among which were reaffirmation that the protocols adopted recently by the Council of State declaring Transitional Government to be "the Government of Liberia" and the Council of State to be its "collective presidency" contradicted the spirit of the Abuja Agreement; recognition of the need for all the Liberian factions to participate in the decision-making process and the statement that the Transitional Government should strive to achieve that end in a democratic framework; non-recognition of any Government that achieved power by the use of force; and reaffirmation of the need for elections to be held at the earliest possible opportunity.

The meeting also stressed the conditions to which all Liberian factions must commit themselves in order to return to the Abuja framework — primarily complete and immediate observance of the cease-fire signed on 11 April 1996; the withdrawal of civilian combatants; and the redeployment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group

(ECOMOG) in Monrovia to guarantee the liberty and safety of all civilians, without exception.

In this framework, we received with some satisfaction yesterday the news from Monrovia of the combatants' departure from the capital and the expanded deployment of ECOMOG throughout the city. It is our hope that the meeting held last Thursday between the representatives of General Roosevelt Johnson and the Krahn forces, on the one side, and of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and General Alhaji Kromah's Wing of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-K) on the other — under the joint supervision of ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) — is but the first step, to be followed by other necessary measures, in making Monrovia a safe haven and restoring stability to the capital as soon as possible.

In this regard, I express Egypt's appreciation and support for the United States initiative to establish an International Contact Group on Liberia, to include donor Governments and concerned international and regional organizations, in order to follow up on the achievement of the desired settlement in Liberia. I cannot fail to express the thanks and gratitude of the Government of Egypt for the effective role played by the United States in the evacuation of United Nations personnel and that of diplomatic missions from Monrovia, including the Egyptian Ambassador and the staff of the Egyptian Embassy, early last month in a well-organized and rapid operation that deserves our praise and appreciation.

Egypt reaffirms its full support for the efforts of ECOWAS and ECOMOG and calls upon the international community to render all possible assistance to these efforts without delay. ECOWAS's clear commitment to the achievement of a peaceful settlement in Liberia — manifest in its deployment of over 7,000 soldiers under very difficult circumstances, with which we are all familiar, and at great cost — is in itself a success that cannot be denied. This is especially true given the fact that the arms embargo imposed on Liberia under Security Council resolution 788 (1992) has not been fully or strictly observed. We believe that it is premature for now to judge this pioneering regional peace-keeping experiment to be a failure. It is our hope that it will continue, and we call for more international support for such efforts.

We agree with the Secretary-General's statement in paragraph 45 of his report that the withdrawal of ECOMOG from Liberia before peace is re-established could be catastrophic not only for the country — whose fate could echo that of Somalia should the Mission be withdrawn — but also for the subregion as a whole.

Recent events in Liberia have placed in stark relief the serious dimensions of the African refugee problem. The reluctance of a number of States neighbours of Liberia to take in the refugees on the *Bulk Challenger* has revealed a new aspect of the social and economic problems suffered by the countries of the region as a result of the successive waves of refugees, which threaten to deplete the scarce resources of the States hosting refugees and, indeed, their very internal stability.

Recent events have revealed a new and serious problem of a different kind: the exploitation by the factional leaders of school-age children in their conflict by supplying them with weapons, encouraging them to plant mines and plying them with alcohol and narcotic drugs in order to achieve their narrow, parochial political objectives. This situation, in addition to the violations of personal freedoms and human rights referred to by the Secretary-General in his report, requires the special attention of the international community if these problems are not to become chronic conditions that will be very difficult to address in the future.

The delegation of Egypt supports the Secretary-General's proposal to extend the mandate of UNOMIL for three additional months, on the condition that the factional leaders undertake to implement changes in that period leading to the restoration of peace and stability in Liberia. This, in turn, will lead to the creation of a climate favourable to the holding of presidential elections in August. The factional leaders in Liberia must understand that the presence of ECOMOG is a rare and precious opportunity that it may be difficult to recreate and must therefore not be squandered. In particular, the initiation of negotiations in earnest would undoubtedly be a decisive factor in the continued provision by the international community of humanitarian and economic assistance to Liberia in the future.

Since 1989, 13 peace agreements have failed to achieve the desired settlement in Liberia. It is unacceptable for the current efforts to fail as a result of personal ambitions that do not take the interests of the Liberian people into account. It is unacceptable for the Liberian people to be deprived of their legitimate rights to life and development. It is unacceptable for them to be left behind in the march of progress.

The first step the factional leaders could take to prove their good intentions would be to return the property looted from the United Nations, Embassies and elsewhere no later than the end of next June. The plundering and looting of such property is unacceptable and could jeopardize the return of UNOMIL and the resumption of its work unless it receives additional

support, which would constitute an additional burden on the United Nations and its Members. In this connection, the delegation of Egypt calls upon all Members to pay promptly their contributions to the peace-keeping budget in order to enable the United Nations to fulfil its mandates in Liberia and other countries.

We wish to reaffirm our support for the extension of UNOMIL's mandate and our conviction that the international community must not abandon Liberia. We would also like to express our support for the efforts of the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and all those who have participated in UNOMIL, including both those who remained in Liberia despite the difficult circumstances and those who were provisionally repatriated while awaiting an improvement in the situation there. We hope that the next three months will bring tangible, positive developments in the country.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Egypt for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Martínez Blanco (Honduras) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) paints a generally woeful picture of the situation in that country, where the violent struggle for power by the political factions is frustrating both the legitimate aspirations of the Liberian people to live in peace and the efforts of the international community to put an end to the conflict by peaceful means within the framework established by the Abuja Agreement. My delegation wishes here to express its concern over the continuation of hostilities and the deterioration of the security situation in Liberia, which threatens the peace process, deepens the political crisis and adversely affects respect for human rights and humanitarian assistance.

For more than six years the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have been engaged in a broad effort to put an end to the Liberian civil war. However, the lack of political will, of firm resolve by the parties to comply with the Abuja Agreement and of a serious commitment to maintain the cease-fire continue to undermine the viability of the peace process and could mean the loss of the support given so far by the international community.

My delegation has taken note of the Mechanism adopted last 7 May by the Foreign Ministers of the ECOWAS member countries, at their meeting in Accra, to reactivate the Abuja Agreement in Liberia. They reaffirmed that the Agreement is essential as a basis for the achievement of peace in Liberia and set forth conditions that must be met by the Liberian factions in order to renew its implementation.

My delegation wishes to highlight the importance of the fulfilment of those conditions for the peace process in Liberia. If the hostilities continue, if the Liberian factions do not soon restore the cease-fire, if they do not withdraw their combatants from the city of Monrovia, if they do not return the weapons taken from the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the equipment plundered from UNOMIL, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, and if they do not guarantee civilians' safety and freedom of movement, the consequences for the country and for the Liberian people will be catastrophic; for the international community will not wish to continue to take part in a peace process that the parties fail to show clear resolve to carry to completion, and ECOWAS and UNOMIL, which have been dealing with the conflict for years, could consider withdrawing from Liberia. My delegation therefore supports the appeal in the Secretary-General's report for the parties to implement without further delay the measures agreed upon by ECOWAS in Accra.

The most important things at this moment are the restoration of the basic conditions of peace and security in Liberia and the renewal of the implementation of the Abuja Agreement. In the conditions of insecurity and instability prevailing in the country, it is impossible to guarantee the participation of all sectors of civil society in the peace process or the holding of the elections provided for in the Agreement. Nor is it feasible in such a situation for UNOMIL to accomplish effectively its tasks or to be able to investigate reports of human rights violations committed during the recent hostilities. It is also unlikely that humanitarian assistance will be able to reach the majority of displaced civilians and that the repatriation of the hundreds of thousands of Liberian refugees seeking refuge in neighbouring countries can be carried out. We therefore wish to reiterate the need for the parties to take concrete steps to restore public order throughout Liberia.

My delegation wishes to highlight the significant role played by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for the promotion of a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Liberia. We recognize the importance of its continuing presence in Liberia, despite the serious limitations in terms of personnel and resources that do not allow it to provide adequate protection for United Nations personnel and property. ECOMOG should therefore be provided with sufficient funds and the necessary human resources to carry out its functions as a peace-keeping force. We also believe that the United Nations Observer Mission in

Liberia continues to play an important role in support of the efforts of ECOWAS to promote the renewal of the peace process and the adoption of confidence-building measures that will make it possible to implement the Abuja Agreement.

Accordingly, my delegation would be prepared to support the recommendation made by the Secretary-General in his report that the mandate of UNOMIL be extended, with the number of its personnel subject to increase or reduction depending on developments in the situation in Liberia.

Mr. Nkgowe (Botswana): My delegation was deeply disturbed by the resumption of fighting in Liberia on 6 April 1996, which reversed in the cruellest and most brutal manner the gains of a promising peace process. The senseless bloodletting that has been visited upon Monrovia, which had been a safe haven for most of the six years of civil war, brought despair where there had been hope for a peaceful future.

The Liberian faction leaders and parties bear ultimate responsibility for leading their country and their people down a path of merciless killings and wanton destruction of property. It is incomprehensible that people who aspire to the leadership of their country can at the same time reduce it to a wasteland and its capital to a ghost town.

What kind of country do they want to rule — a country that has been reduced to rubble? The resumption of hostilities has revealed the faction leaders as power-hungry, self-seeking men with no love for country and people. They should endeavour to change this image if they are to be taken seriously and be worthy of the assistance of the international community.

There is no doubt that the current fighting was a grave mistake, a terrible military miscalculation which resulted in a stalemate. It should not have been attempted in the first place. It is clear that no faction leader can now hope to impose his will on the others. In other words, the faction leaders have no choice but to resume negotiations aimed at the peaceful resolution of the Liberian national crisis.

The most painful aspect of the tragedy in Liberia is that it was predictable. The international community was fully aware from the time the Abuja Agreement was signed that the success of the peace process depended on the speedy disengagement, disarmament and demobilization of the combatants. There was ample information on the financial and material resources necessary to get the job done. Yet the appeals of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for financial and logistical support did not elicit a sufficient and effective response from the international community. These African States have made tremendous sacrifices for the cause of peace in Liberia. They have fully understood that so long as the sore that is Liberia continues to fester, none of them can enjoy good health.

We applaud and commend the commitment and tenacity of purpose of the ECOWAS member States participating in ECOMOG. It is unfortunate that signs of "Liberia fatigue" are starting to manifest themselves among them. They are doing an exemplary job in regional peace-keeping, one worth emulating elsewhere in Africa and other parts of the world. Our wish is that they stay the course. They should persevere and transcend the present difficulties. We are fully alive to the immense financial and logistical problems with which they have to contend, but we are also aware that they have been so close to success that nothing new is likely to match their experience or their staying capacity. History will pass a better judgment on their unswerving determination to secure peace in Liberia than the world is currently doing. The people of Liberia will never forget their sterling efforts and sacrifices.

We appeal to the rest of the ECOWAS member States to join their brothers in the search for peace in Liberia. The Liberian peace dividend would be shared among all West African States, and it is imperative that all States in the subregion should participate in its attainment. They should do whatever it takes to get involved, and they should not allow any obstacle to stand in their way. We believe the crisis in Liberia would be more amenable to a solution with a determined, collective and united approach by all countries of the subregion.

The United Nations cannot afford to allow the efforts of ECOMOG to fail. ECOMOG's failure would have far-reaching implications for future cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in peace-keeping operations. In this connection, it is worth noting that there are already questions about what would happen in post-ECOMOG peace-keeping in Liberia; that is, what would happen in Liberia should ECOMOG fail. This thought is probably born out of the fact that the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) has no independent existence; it is in Liberia because ECOMOG is there.

It is, however, important to recognize that the regional arrangement in Liberia is no substitute for the responsibilities of the United Nations. The United Nations remains the premier organization for the maintenance of international peace and security, and in this regard, it is clear that the withdrawal of ECOMOG

from Liberia would lead to the immediate reassumption by the United Nations of its responsibilities in that country.

My delegation looked forward to the results of the meeting of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine, which was held on 7 and 8 May 1996. The decisions made at that meeting have the full support of my delegation, and we call upon the faction leaders to implement them expeditiously. In this regard, we wish to reiterate our appeal to the international community to render assistance to ECOMOG so that it can carry out its tasks more effectively. The events of the past few weeks have clearly shown not only that ECOMOG needs the financial and logistical resources to carry out its mandate, but also that its troop strength needs to be substantially increased to enable it to serve as a credible deterrent to the marauding factional fighters. It is important that concerted efforts be made to assist ECOMOG to become a robust peace-keeping force capable of defending itself and the civilian population as necessary. The provision of sufficient resources would enable more West African States and other countries in the region and beyond to participate in the peace-keeping efforts in Liberia. It is obvious that under the present circumstances, African States cannot sustain their troops in Liberia for any reasonable length of time.

We are fully aware that the situation in Liberia does not lend itself to easy solutions. The resumption of hostilities in that country on 6 April put the clock back several months. The situation in Liberia is, however, far from hopeless. It requires only that all concerned do their part. In this respect, we are aware of the efforts of the Organization of African Unity in the search for a solution to the crisis in Liberia. The situation in Liberia calls for a creative collective response by the international community. The United Nations, the European Union and the Organization of African Unity should intensify their cooperation to find practical ways to bring the crisis in Liberia to an end. ECOMOG is so far the only vehicle we have in the field for the attainment of that goal.

According to a BBC report this morning, ECOMOG should have succeeded in deploying its forces throughout Monrovia by the end of this week. This would be a great achievement towards gaining the support of the international community. It is time the international community fully recognized the important role being played by ECOMOG in Liberia and gave it all the support it needs. Failure to support the efforts of ECOMOG in Liberia could result in a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions, and we do not believe this is the path the international community would like Liberia to follow.

Mr. Choi (Republic of Korea): The tragic situation of Liberia was encapsulated by the media images of teenage soldiers rampaging through the streets of Monrovia toting deadly weapons and the ordeal of the refugees aboard the freighter *Bulk Challenger* earlier this month. The Republic of Korea expresses its strong indignation at the atrocities committed by the warring Liberian factions, the wanton killings, the looting and the destruction which have plunged Monrovia into total anarchy for nearly two months. The dire humanitarian situation resulting from the carnage is also cause for serious concern among all of us. What has been particularly disturbing to my Government was the disrespect that the Liberian factions have shown towards the United Nations in the massive and systematic looting of United Nations property, including most of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia's (UNOMIL) vehicles and equipment. My Government takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to the United States Government for its assistance in evacuating international personnel from Liberia to safety in neighbouring countries.

The latest turn of events in Liberia indicates the limits of the international community's ability to help restore internal peace and stability in the failed State, where the warring factions are determined to use any means to seize power, even at the risk of destroying the whole country and holding the entire population hostage. It was made clear once again that the good will of the international community cannot be a substitute for the political will of the parties to help themselves in resolving any conflict. The resumption of fighting has undone much of the hard-won progress in the Liberian peace process. It has further deepened the mutual mistrust among the faction leaders, exacerbating the already daunting challenges facing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and UNOMIL. The Abuja Agreement has lost much of its credibility and, thus, its chances of being implemented in its original form.

The question now is: what can the international community do about all this? The following are my delegation's observations.

First, the Abuja Agreement should remain the basis for any effort to restore peace and stability in Liberia, although its implementation schedule will require adjustment in the light of latest developments. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of the Mechanism for Returning Liberia to the Abuja Agreement by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Foreign Ministers in Accra early this month. We urge the Liberian factions to faithfully fulfil the conditions set out under the Mechanism, as referred to in paragraph 7 of the Secretary General's report (S/1996/362). The commitment of the Liberian factions

to the peace process will be tested by how faithfully and expeditiously they carry out these conditions. We also underline the importance of the Council of State's working within the spirit of the Abuja Agreement.

Secondly, the international community can make a difference in Liberia by strengthening the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peace-keeping capability. While much has been said about ECOMOG's controversial role recently, especially in responding to the latest eruption of fighting in Monrovia, we believe ECOMOG remains the only effective deterrent force to bear upon the Liberian factions. With greater international assistance and logistical support, we believe ECOMOG can perform better. On its part, ECOWAS also has its own share of effort to make to enhance ECOMOG's capability and effectiveness through an improved force and command structure, strict neutrality and strengthened discipline. What is at stake here goes beyond the success or failure of the Liberian peace process. Given that Liberia is the first case in which a regional organization has been leading peace-keeping operations in cooperation with the United Nations, the failure of ECOMOG's mission could have adverse consequences for the future role of regional or subregional organizations in Africa in dealing with intra-regional conflicts.

Thirdly, the faction leaders should be sternly warned of the possible consequences of their misbehaviour. They should be held personally responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law. Moreover, they should be served a clear warning that any faction leader who takes power by any means other than the democratic process will be denied international recognition. We welcome the decision of the ECOWAS Foreign Ministers in Accra to this effect.

Finally, my delegation believes that the arms embargo put in place by resolution 788 (1992) should be more effectively implemented. Without a cutting off of the supply of arms to the factions, the success of the peace process cannot be ensured.

Regarding the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of UNOMIL for three months, my delegation supports it with the conviction that the very presence of UNOMIL in Liberia, even at a minimal level, carries symbolic significance as a token of the United Nations commitment to the restoration of peace and stability in Liberia. It will help foster a climate of confidence conducive to reviving the peace process. However, the continued presence of UNOMIL makes sense only if the Liberian parties demonstrate by concrete actions their commitment to the peace process, and only as long as ECOWAS maintains its mission to monitor its implementation and the safety of UNOMIL personnel is assured.

In concluding, my Government appeals to the leaders of the warring factions in Liberia to stop further bloodshed and return immediately to the peace process. It is high time for them to rise above their personal greed and ambition for power and to settle their differences through democratic processes.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The events of the last two months in Liberia have exceeded the gloomiest predictions and have struck the strongest of blows to hopes for a rapid return of Liberia to peace, which is so badly needed for its long-suffering people, utterly exhausted by a six-year fratricidal war. The resumption of hostilities in Liberia — whose epicentre this time was the capital, Monrovia — led to numerous victims, much destruction and a bacchanalia of looting and violence, with a mass exodus of refugees and displaced persons. All of this has not only exacerbated the situation in Liberia itself, taking it to the limits, but has threatened the stability of the neighbouring countries of the region. The leaders of the warring factions have once again demonstrated complete disregard for the obligations undertaken under the Abuja Agreement. What is glaring here is their hostility to the United Nations and to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), forcing most of the international personnel to evacuate.

We firmly condemn these irresponsible actions and urgently call upon the leaders of the warring factions to strictly comply with the cease-fire; to provide firm guarantees of security to the United Nations and to other international and foreign personnel; to fully withdraw the fighters from Monrovia; to ensure conditions for the unimpeded deployment of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) within the city; and to restore its status as a safe haven.

We view the main objective of today's meeting of the Security Council as the sending to the leaders of the warring factions of an absolutely clear signal that the patience of the international community is not unlimited and that they are obliged to enter into constructive negotiations for a resumption of the peace process, to draw up a comprehensive plan for its implementation and to unswervingly implement it.

An important role in moving the parties to dialogue must be played by the regional and subregional organizations — in particular, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and ECOWAS, which are familiar with the intricacies and the highly complex web of contradictions

that lie at the basis of the present crisis and can find mutually acceptable means to resolve them.

We believe that the Security Council must appeal to the membership of ECOWAS to make use of their forthcoming summit meeting for the adoption of decisions on a possible reorganization and strengthening of structures and also on a stepping-up of the role of the forces of ECOMOG in Liberia, together with measures to exert pressure on the leaders of the Liberian factions. Without that, it is hardly possible to count on implementation of the Abuja Agreements and on a lasting political settlement in this African country. Also of particular importance is unswerving compliance by all States with the arms embargo imposed by resolution 788 (1992).

The Russian delegation regards as well-founded the proposal of the Secretary-General in his report of 21 May 1996 regarding the extension of the mandate of United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) by three months, to 31 August this year. It is clear that the further presence of UNOMIL fully depends on the continued presence in that country of the united regional military contingent, ECOMOG. We expect that the Secretary-General will submit to the Security Council recommendations on the further role of UNOMIL in the light of the concrete developments and the results of the ECOWAS summit.

In conclusion, we once again wish to call upon the leaders of the warring parties in Liberia to renounce political ambitions, to cease civil strife and to demonstrate responsibility for the fate of the people in the country. We advise them to carefully weigh all the possible, far-reaching consequences of their present senseless policy. We believe that the sad experience of Somalia should serve as a lesson to them in this regard.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): Since I have not had the personal opportunity to do this before, allow me, Sir, to congratulate you most warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May, which you are exercising with your well known and highly appreciated ability, wisdom and complete impartiality. I also wish to express my country's and my personal warm appreciation to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Chile, Ambassador Juan Somavía, for his very successful presidency in the month of April and for having organized during that month, in such a gracious and effective way, an informal meeting between the President of the Republic of Italy and the 15 members of the Security Council.

I have the honour to speak in my capacity as the representative of the presidency of the European Union. Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia associate themselves with this statement.

This is the second time in 1996 that events in Liberia have prompted the Security Council to address the issue in the framework of a public debate. In January, the deteriorating situation on the ground had led the Council to warn the parties that the increasing level of violence would jeopardize the peace process. In the light of the recent fighting in the country, it appears today that this prediction was even too optimistic. The Abuja Agreement of August 1995, which raised our hopes for a positive outcome of the Liberian peace process, seems now more distant than ever.

Is there still a chance for peace in Liberia? We do not have the answer to that question, but after nearly two months of fighting, looting, harassment of United Nations and international personnel and human rights violations, the prospects seem very gloomy indeed. In Liberia a few men are holding an entire population hostage, protracting the suffering of scores of women, children and men beyond human understanding.

Our message to the Liberian warring factions is short and clear: we reiterate the call for an immediate cease-fire and we demand that they return to the Abuja peace process. We have exhausted our appeals to those who have once more plunged the country into chaos and violence, also threatening the stability of the West African region.

We want to make it clear that we do not intend to extend recognition to any Government established through the use of force.

The situation in Liberia reminds us of what happened in Somalia not long ago. There too, the international community tried to contribute to the search for peace only to find that the struggle for power was the overwhelming concern of the faction leaders and was much more important to them than the well-being of the people. We sincerely hope that the stubborn will of the Liberian warlords to continue their fight will not force the international community once again to withdraw from an African country which is in desperate need of help. As the Secretary-General says in his report, this could be catastrophic not only for the country but also for the subregion as a whole. In this respect, we note the Secretary-General's recommendation that the mandate of United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) be extended for three months.

The European Union and its member States have so far been among the major providers of relief assistance to Liberia. Today the continued fighting and the level of insecurity are preventing delivery of assistance. We can only say that we remain committed to assisting the civilian population. Yet we cannot but repeat that such support will depend on the return of a safe and secure environment.

In 1992 the Security Council, by resolution 788 (1992), imposed an embargo on all shipments of weapons and military equipment to Liberia. Under resolution 985 (1995), all States have the obligation to bring all instances of violations of the arms embargo before the Committee established by that resolution. It is clear that the embargo is continually violated. We wish to appeal to all countries to launch in-depth investigations into the flow of arms into Liberia. As long as the factions can arm themselves there will be no real possibility of attaining a long-lasting peace in Liberia.

We reiterate our support for the strenuous efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Chairman, President Rawlings, to achieve peace. The agreement signed in Abuja in August 1995, which in our view still provides the central framework for the peace process, was successfully brokered by ECOWAS. It is only through the ongoing commitment of the neighbouring States that peace in Liberia has a chance to prevail. We therefore express the hope that the next summit of ECOWAS States will yield positive results. We also agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) lacks the resources and adequate structure to carry out its responsibilities effectively.

Finally, we cannot but underline the direct and personal responsibility of the Liberian warlords on this issue. Not only is it their responsibility to restore peace, but they should also be warned that the international community will hold them responsible for the breaches of human rights and humanitarian law committed in the country, as reported in the Secretary-General's report.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Italy for the kind words he addressed to me.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): The British Government has read with care the Secretary-General's report dated 21 May on the situation in Liberia. It makes sombre reading indeed. Its account of the complete breakdown of law and order in Monrovia, the complete disregard of the faction leaders for the commitments they freely entered into in the Abuja Agreement and the continuing suffering of ordinary Liberians reflect the precarious situation in Liberia which we are all facing. We agree with the Secretary-General that, in these circumstances, his recommendation that the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) be continued for a further three months on a "care and maintenance" basis is the right one. We are therefore in favour of the Security Council adopting a resolution to this effect.

The faction leaders' responsibility for the plight of their own people is clear. So is their responsibility to abide by the Abuja Agreement. We endorse the conclusions of the Accra meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that the Abuja Agreement must be put back on track. Full implementation of the Agreement remains the best framework for solving Liberia's problems. And the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) remains the most viable option for progress on the ground. Reinforcement of ECOMOG is still badly needed, not least to ensure adequate security for UNOMIL personnel. We hope the donor community will carefully consider what help can most usefully be given.

We would welcome in particular the deployment of the second Ghanaian battalion to ECOMOG. But we note the Ghanaian Government's concern about the faction leaders' failure to implement the Abuja Agreement and the possibility that the extra battalion might be used to facilitate the withdrawal of all Ghanaian troops in Liberia.

The Secretary-General's report emphasizes that UNOMIL's presence would be untenable in the event of an ECOMOG withdrawal from Liberia. The ECOWAS Foreign Ministers have made it clear that time is running out for the faction leaders. The international community is running out of patience. An immediate cease-fire must be agreed and adhered to. Monrovia must be returned to its former status as a place of safety. ECOMOG must be permitted to deploy in accordance with its mandate. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to get through to those in the most need. Without these basic steps, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants cannot go ahead.

The message for the faction leaders cannot be clearer: stop fighting, lay down your weapons, listen to the pleas of your suffering people. That is the only way forward for Liberia.

Mr. Hesse (Germany): The present situation in Liberia is a matter of deep concern to all of us. We welcome this open debate, which gives members of the Council, as well as other Member States of the United

Nations, an opportunity to express their views on a conflict which affects many countries. We wish to offer our views in the light of the recent report submitted by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), which bears the rather misleading title of "progress report". There has been no progress; unfortunately, there has been only backward movement, from a cease-fire to new fighting and killing.

Our assessment of the situation is clear: we are deeply disappointed by and concerned about the continuation of fighting in Monrovia and in other parts of Liberia. The considerable efforts to restore peace and stability to that country, which has seen so much violence over the past six years, have been undone. The substantial hopes related to the now-interrupted peace process have been shattered since fighting resumed in Monrovia six weeks ago.

The responsibility for disrupting the peace process lies solely with the leaders of the various militias, who have shown no regard for the Liberian people's quest for survival — let alone their well-being — or for the universally accepted principles of international humanitarian law and human rights. They have inflicted a cruel war upon the population of Liberia and have been involved in committing outrageous atrocities against the civilian population. The international community must hold them responsible for their deeds. Our sympathy is with the people of Liberia. We are keeping their plight in mind while trying to find ways to respond adequately to the situation.

We strongly urge the faction leaders to put an immediate end to the fighting and to comply with the demands put forward in the Mechanism for Returning Liberia to the Abuja Agreement, issued by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Committee of Nine on Liberia on 8 May, which also received unanimous support from the members of the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) in its second meeting on 24 May 1996 in New York.

We expect the faction leaders in Liberia immediately to implement concrete measures to return to the peace process in accordance with the Mechanism, including in particular the restoration of the cease-fire, the withdrawal of armed fighters from Monrovia, the re-establishment of Monrovia as a safe haven, the return of vehicles and other equipment looted from UNOMIL, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations and the return of weapons taken from the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

We expect the faction leaders to prove their commitment to the principles of the Abuja Agreement by immediately taking these measures. ECOWAS has already indicated that its further involvement in Liberia will be reviewed by early August on the basis of progress made in fulfilling these conditions. Let me add that we are also in favour of a more efficient arms embargo, which would help stop the flow of arms for the senseless killing.

The Security Council will have to decide by the end of this week on the possible extension of the mandate of UNOMIL. The Council will have to decide under what circumstances the presence of UNOMIL in Liberia still makes sense. We urge the faction leaders in Monrovia to make every effort to show by their immediate implementation of those measures that they welcome the continued presence of UNOMIL in their country.

We will also have to find ways and means to enable civil society to assume its rightful place in the peace process and thus to meet the desire of Liberian civilians to reinsert themselves in that process.

Germany has contributed substantially in the past to humanitarian efforts to alleviate the plight of the war-ravaged Liberian people and will continue to do so through bilateral contributions, contributions to the budget of the European Community Humanitarian Office and contributions to the budgets of the various agencies of the United Nations. Delivering humanitarian assistance, however, depends on the existence of a safe and secure environment, which, unfortunately, does not prevail in Liberia at the moment. While urging the faction leaders to comply with the demands outlined before, we wish to express our hope that conditions may soon be restored which will allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the needy Liberian population.

Allow me to conclude by commending ECOWAS and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for their continued efforts to facilitate the resumption of the peace process. We deplore the deaths of more than 100 ECOMOG soldiers in the recent fighting. I also wish to express our appreciation to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, to his Special Representative and to the staff of UNOMIL for their continuing efforts to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

Mr. Dejammet (*interpretation from French*): The French delegation has studied carefully the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Liberia. The recent events in that country are a source of continuing concern for the French Government. The descent into chaos of Liberia, which seemed to be in the process of concluding the peace process decided upon in Abuja, was deeply disappointing.

We believe that the factions bear full responsibility for what has taken place. The Secretary-General indicates in his report that

> "the faction leaders have clearly demonstrated their disregard for the aspirations of the Liberian people for peace." (*S/1996/362, para. 43*)

We share that assessment.

The French delegation regrets in particular that the resumption of fighting in Monrovia and in the rest of the country has nullified the efforts made in the humanitarian sphere. The fighting has caused half the population of the capital to flee and has dashed the hopes of 750,000 refugees for a rapid return home.

The Foreign Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), meeting in Accra on 7 May, reaffirmed that the Abuja Agreement was the only basis on which to restore peace in Liberia. On that premise, they determined a number of measures that the factions must implement by the beginning of August, when the ECOWAS Summit is to be held. The Foreign Ministers stated that the African force's continued presence in Liberia will depend on progress made by the factions to put the peace process back on track. For his part, the Secretary-General indicates in his report that UNOMIL will remain in Liberia only if ECOMOG is still there.

The French delegation hopes that the factions will heed this appeal. The international community's total withdrawal from Liberia would allow a resumption of fighting throughout the country, with no prospect of a short-term settlement. This would be extremely dangerous for the stability of the subregion, which is why we do not wish to abandon the Liberians to themselves.

France has lent its constant support to the peace process in Liberia. It will continue to do so by agreeing, as recommended by the Secretary-General, to extend the mandate of UNOMIL for three months. As it has committed itself to do, France will also provide assistance to the peace process in the form of F15 million, of which F3.5 million will be allocated to the special United Nations Trust Fund for the implementation of the peace agreements in Liberia. This should allow, as urged by the Secretary-General, for the equipment of a battalion of the African force. We hope that this assistance will contribute to strengthening ECOMOG in the field and thus better guarantee security in the capital and throughout the country when the ECOWAS soldiers are able to redeploy there.

This said, the extension of UNOMIL's mandate should give the Council the opportunity to consider whether the warlords truly intend to re-establish peace in Liberia. If they do not, we shall have, as the Secretary-General suggests, to reconsider the role of the Observer Mission. We sincerely hope that we will not be obliged to vote for its withdrawal.

We know that the warlords in Liberia still believe that a military solution is possible in a conflict that has bloodied the country for nearly seven years. The warlords are mistaken. The Secretary-General writes in his report that the faction leaders should carefully ponder the lessons of Somalia. We strongly urge them to follow the Secretary-General's advice to draw the appropriate conclusions in order to allow all Liberians to return to the path of democracy and progress.

Mr. Włosowicz (Poland): The Polish delegation would like to express its satisfaction that the Security Council has convened this open debate on the situation in Liberia to explore the international community's options with regard to the bloody conflict in that country. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his informative, although very pessimistic, report on Liberia, issued in connection with the expiration of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) on 31 May.

The Polish delegation is deeply concerned by the continuing fights between the antagonistic factions in Monrovia and by all their consequences: the complete breakdown of law and order, violence against the civilian population, massive looting — which has also affected the property of the international organizations operating in Liberia — and a severe and ever-deteriorating humanitarian situation. All these developments mark a very serious setback in the peace process in Liberia and a return to the civil war that has been devastating that country for the past 20 years.

We are seriously disquieted by the fact that the timetable for the fulfilment of the obligations assumed by the parties to the conflict under the Abuja Agreement has been completely disrupted. As the Secretary-General has indicated in his report, it is not now to be expected that the free and democratic elections will be held in August.

The international community is disappointed and discouraged by the development of the situation in Liberia, which poses a threat to security throughout the region of West Africa. Despite the international community's longstanding commitment to resolve the conflict in that country and the engagement of people and resources in the peace-keeping operations led by the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the goal of all these

efforts — that is, a peaceful settlement of the conflict — seems to be very remote at this stage. We are now confronted with the very serious questions of how to deal with the Liberian conflict and whether to continue the involvement of the international community in the affairs of that country.

It should be emphasized that the primary responsibility for the developments in Liberia lies with the leaders of the warring factions, who do not demonstrate the political will for an accord and a compromise. We share the opinion of the Secretary-General, expressed in his report, that the tendency of some Liberian warlords to violate the provisions of the Abuja Agreement and to interpret them in their own way led directly to the outbreak of the recent bloody fighting. We are also of the view that any leader who would seize power by force should be internationally ostracized.

The Liberian leaders should become conscious that the international community will be ready to maintain its presence in their country only if they return to the principles determined in the Abuja Agreement. Otherwise, it may begin considering a withdrawal from Liberia, with all the ensuing consequences for that country. With such a position in mind, we fully support the ECOWAS Foreign Ministers, who agreed in Accra on the conditions to be fulfilled by the Liberian faction leaders, including the restoration of the cease-fire and the withdrawal of fighters from Monrovia as the first steps towards reinitiating the peace process.

The efforts made to date by the States of West Africa to resolve the internal conflict in neighbouring Liberia should be highly appreciated. First of all, we would like to emphasize the role played by the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Its termination would have very serious consequences for that country, as the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report.

We are of the opinion that, pending the results of the ECOWAS summit, the international community should offer ECOMOG its strong support. At the same time, the States participating in ECOMOG should spare no effort to improve its efficiency.

The Polish delegation remains convinced that the United Nations should still be engaged in the cause of resolving the Liberian conflict. Therefore, we express our gratitude to the Secretary-General and to his representatives, especially Mr. James Jonah, for all the efforts they have made to maintain and facilitate the negotiations between the antagonistic Liberian parties.

We also pay tribute to UNOMIL, which has for many years embodied the interest of the international community in resolving the Liberian conflict. Due to UNOMIL's mandate as an observation Mission and to its modest size, it is dependent on ECOMOG, particularly in terms of ensuring the security of its personnel. For these reasons, we support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that, at this stage, the mandate of UNOMIL at its diminished size should be extended for no more than three months, to 31 August, when the results of the ECOWAS summit with regard to the question of maintaining ECOMOG will be known.

In conclusion, let me emphasize once more that the fulfilment of the hopes for a propitious future for Liberia depends first of all on Liberians themselves.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As I am speaking for the first time in an open meeting of the Council during your presidency, Sir, allow me warmly to thank you for China's very efficient tenure of the presidency. I wish to congratulate you and your very competent team on the excellent manner in which you are leading the Council's deliberations. It is a pleasure to work under your presidency.

I also wish to thank you for having convened an open debate on this question at a particularly complex moment in the development of political and social events in Liberia. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation and for the efforts he has made to surmount the deep political crisis in Liberia. We agree with his proposal that the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) should be extended under the conditions described in his report.

We also wish to thank Mr. James Jonah for his activities in the field and all of the personnel of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations who continue to work despite the difficult situation in which they find themselves. Our gratitude also goes to the Government of the United States for its humanitarian work.

The horror of the violence that has been taking place in Monrovia is confirmed by the report we have before us. The vile acts committed, especially the attacks on civilians and humanitarian assistance institutions, show utter contempt for human life.

The political crisis that arose at the end of March has once again undone all the political efforts undertaken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations since the beginning of this decade.

Particularly unacceptable is the faction leaders' disregard for the Liberian people's aspirations for peace. There has also been an obvious lack of respect for and abuse of the United Nations, ECOWAS, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the international community.

Among the measures to be taken should be those intended to ensure that the crimes committed against civilians and human rights violations are investigated. The investigations should be aimed at determining the criminal and civil responsibilities of the perpetrators and at compensating the victims for damages. Abuses against governmental and non-governmental organizations should also be investigated, identifying the responsibilities borne by the various factions and leaders. We deem it essential to act firmly and to demand the perpetrators to assume responsibility. The impunity with which the same groups have engaged in earlier misdeeds encourages the recurrence of these types of actions. We do not want a culture of impunity to continue to develop in Liberia.

The first time we made a formal statement on the activities of the United Nations Observer Mission, last January, we highlighted the importance we attach to the process of peace and reconstruction in Liberia. We also emphasized that this United Nations operation was a support activity for a regional initiative for the restoration of peace. This effort at the African level seemed to be a new and expeditious way to deal with the problems of threats to peace, and we think that it needs to be successful, because of its twofold implications: for overcoming the problems of Liberia and for promoting the regional role in conflict resolution.

As a result of the absolute lack of cooperation by the faction leaders in Liberia, there is the risk that the ECOWAS countries may decide to put an end to the work of ECOMOG in that country, which would bring about the end of the operations of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). The possible consequences for the civilian population lead us to request that all possible efforts be undertaken to prevent this from occurring.

It is obvious that ECOWAS has serious difficulties in financing ECOMOG operations and that lack of international support jeopardizes their continuation. An appeal by the Council to the international community for this purpose does not seem to be enough to overcome the problem. It may be necessary to consider forms of financing under the support plans of the Bretton Woods institutions for Liberia, or to link the development of the programmes of the United Nations system in Liberia to the fulfilment of the objectives of a cease-fire and political agreements, as provided for in the special initiative for Africa, launched by the Secretary-General only a few months ago. We should also consider the possibility of signing commitments of future reimbursements to be paid to a fund for peace in Africa. In any event, the matter of financing requires an innovative approach.

It is also essential to achieve a cease-fire as soon as possible and to implement the Abuja Agreement. It is impossible to mobilize international support for a country whose leaders, at the expense of the enormous suffering of its civilian population, maintain a position of utter disregard for peace and for the international organizations committed to the work of achieving it. This explains the lack of contributions to the Liberian Trust Fund, as mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report. There can be no enthusiasm for supporting initiatives for peace if those who should take the lead in promoting them are the very ones who thwart them at every turn.

The situation in Liberia is a serious test for the Security Council. Even when leaders do not want peace, the Security Council cannot abdicate its humanitarian responsibilities. Even if the leaders do not care about their own people, we, the international community, cannot simply wash our hands and look the other way. When there are no local structures to guarantee the safety of persons, of families and of the communities in which persons and families live, it is the international community that acquires what we might term supplementary humanitarian responsibility to fill that void. Thus, we must give strong backing to the humanitarian organizations of the United Nations, as well as to those of the private sector. The United Nations cannot abandon the people of Liberia to its fate.

Furthermore, it should be clearly stated that many countries will not recognize anyone who might prevail by force in that country.

Another scandalous aspect is the continued flow of weapons to Liberia. The practical result of the embargo is that weapons cost more, not that they no longer reach Liberia. Who is responsible for this? Without a doubt, it is once again the faction leaders, who prefer to devote resources to the war and not to the development of their people; without a doubt, it is the arms merchants, who epitomize immorality by profiting from people's suffering; but it is also the main weapons-producing countries, many of them seated here in the Security Council, and they must implement much stricter and more effective mechanisms to make the arms embargo a real one.

In conclusion, we must express our great concern over the prospect of the elections being postponed because of all this. We believe the elections are an important and fundamental step to overcome the political and ethical crisis afflicting Liberia. The absence of legitimate authority will always be a destabilizing element that must be rectified. Once control of the situation in Monrovia is restored, the highest priority should be attached to the holding of the scheduled elections so that the Liberian people itself can point the way and so that the international community can then offer its fullest support. Chile wishes to express its full solidarity with the people and the civil society of Liberia, and we consider this a moral imperative and a political responsibility of Chilean democracy.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Chile for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its satisfaction that the Security Council has convened this open debate regarding the situation in Liberia. We consider it essential for the members of the United Nations to address the country's tragic situation and to explore the full realm of options that may be taken to end hostilities and to resume the process of national reconciliation.

In this regard, the Indonesian delegation would also like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/1996/362) of 21 May 1996, the seventeenth in a series of progress reports on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). We would equally like to extend our gratitude to Mr. James Jonah, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for his efforts in promoting peace in that country through his recent mission to Liberia. We are also deeply indebted to Mr. Anthony Nyakyi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General; the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG); and all the personnel of UNOMIL who have courageously endeavoured to restore peace and stability in an extremely precarious and dangerous situation.

Having carefully considered the report, and given the facts on the ground, my delegation notes with dismay the sombre and grave situation prevailing in the country. We cannot in this regard but express our deep concern at the rapid deterioration in Liberia since the new flare-up of fighting on 6 April in a resumption of the six-year civil war. Although we are aware that there have been lulls in the fighting, it is distressing to note that thus far no cease-fire seems to hold. It is therefore clear to my delegation that the failure of the parties involved to implement and respect the terms of the Abuja Agreement only further underlines the lack of genuine political will among the Liberian leaders. As we have repeatedly expressed, the implementation of the Abuja Agreement is ultimately the responsibility of the Council of State, established by the Liberian leaders themselves.

Since the adoption of resolution 1041 (1996) by the Security Council early this year, extending the mandate of UNOMIL until the end of this month, we had hoped that this period of time would provide the opportunity — which they would take — for the parties to strive for progress in resolving the outstanding issues between them. However, it is regrettable that, instead, we must register our distress at the use of the peace process only to advance the personal ambitions of the Liberian faction leaders. My delegation therefore reiterates its dismay that the Liberian leaders continue to blatantly disregard the greater interest of the Liberian people, who have undergone untold suffering since the beginning of the conflict in 1989.

It is in this regard that my delegation welcomes the convening of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on 7 May in Accra in order to explore ways and means to end the hostilities and reactivate the stalled peace process. It is furthermore gratifying to note that the Mechanism for Returning Liberia to the Abuja Agreement, adopted by the meeting, reaffirmed that the Abuja Agreement constitutes the only basis for peace in Liberia. The Indonesian delegation fully subscribes to this position. We also share the view that the protocols recently adopted by the Council of State contradict the spirit of the Abuja Agreement, and that any Government that comes to office through the use of force should not be recognized.

One aspect which my delegation wishes to underline is the fact that the Council of State and General Johnson have both welcomed and indeed accepted the recommendations and conditions set by ECOWAS, and both have stated their intention to abide by them. In our opinion, this constitutes a positive development which could become the basis for further confidence-building measures. Considering the negative consequences that might arise from the latest turn of events and its possible destabilizing effects on the whole subregion, my delegation welcomes whatever efforts are being contemplated by Member States to redress the situation. In this respect, we welcome the United States initiative in establishing an International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL). This Group met for the first time in Geneva, bringing together interested donor countries to discuss the issue of restoring security, reinforcing ECOMOG and returning the factions to the Abuja Agreement. These are

indeed critical and fundamental issues if the conflict in Liberia is to be resolved.

The present security situation is indeed alarming. Looting is rampant and hostage-taking is again on the rise. A continued situation of instability does not provide a conducive atmosphere in which to pursue the organization of the electoral process. Thus the elections scheduled for August 1996 according to the Abuja Agreement are unlikely to be held, given the prevailing absence of functioning institutions and the politically and militarily volatile situation. In this context, and bearing in mind the recrudescence of the civil war, my delegation wishes to stress the necessity for all States to strictly comply with their obligation under resolution 788 (1992) with regard to the embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Liberia.

In this context, we believe that a solution to the Liberian conflict must be found internally and regionally. It is therefore imperative that ECOMOG be provided not only with the necessary assistance, but also with a status-of-forces agreement between ECOWAS and the Council of State, in order for it to fulfil its mandate. An effective ECOMOG would in turn be able to provide adequate security for the personnel not only of UNOMIL but of other humanitarian agencies as well, and quell the exodus of Liberians to neighbouring countries. It is therefore essential for the Council to consider the future role of ECOMOG, so that it may be in a position to perform its duties appropriately.

We are deeply concerned at the serious human rights violations prevailing in the country, such as robbery, beating, torture, killing and rape. One of the most vile human rights abuses has been the abuse of children through the practice of creating child soldiers, which we vehemently condemn. My delegation considers that it is of the utmost importance that these violations be properly addressed and that once hostilities cease, and security conditions permit, UNOMIL's vital role of investigating these abuses resume as soon as possible.

The humanitarian situation continues to be alarming. The difficulties encountered are mainly due to increased insecurity in reaching certain areas of Liberia to bring humanitarian aid. We are concerned that some communities have become inaccessible and that relief has been suspended, rendering precarious a situation in which civilians are already in need. In order to ameliorate this situation, it is a matter of urgent importance that all parties extend their fullest cooperation to humanitarian organizations and personnel. In this regard, we call on the Liberian parties to do their utmost to permit free access of humanitarian assistance and provide credible security guarantees.

As for the refugee question, we are aware that the civil war has created a Liberian refugee population of over a million in neighbouring countries, greatly burdening them and thus increasing the risk of regional destabilization. In this respect, we commend the initiative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide assistance to those countries that grant asylum to the Liberians. Needless to say, we maintain the view that the long-term solution to this humanitarian problem resides in the return of peace and stability in Liberia, and that refugee camps can be only a temporary solution.

Finally, Mr. President, considering the debilitating consequences of the continued conflict, we urgently call upon the warring factions to immediately re-establish a cease-fire and to take concrete steps by reaffirming their commitment to the Abuja Agreement. Failure to do so would only confront the Liberian leaders with the risk of losing any form of credibility or support from the international community, particularly in the event that ECOWAS decides to withdraw ECOMOG, with the consequence of UNOMIL's taking a similar step. We therefore share the Secretary-General's observation that the Liberian factions should carefully consider the wide-ranging consequences their actions will have during the next few months.

In the light of these observations, the Indonesian delegation supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that the mandate of UNOMIL be extended for another three months, until 31 August 1996. This position is based on the hope that during this period the Liberian parties will demonstrate, through concrete steps, their political will to resolve the conflict that has beset the Liberian people for far too long. We look forward to the Secretary-General's recommendations on the future role of UNOMIL beyond 31 August, based on the decision of ECOWAS with regard to its own role in Liberia.

Mr. Queta (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation has had several opportunities to state its views on the situation in Liberia, a brother country that for the past six years has been ravaged by a devastating war.

During the Security Council's consideration of the fifteenth progress report by the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) we listened with particular attention to the statement by the Member of the Collective Presidency of the Liberian National Transitional Government, His Excellency Alhaji

G.V. Kromah, and were encouraged to learn that all the Liberian factions were determined to pursue the cause of national reconciliation. According to Mr. Kromah,

> "The principle of collective fate is today working so heavily in favour of peace that I and my colleagues in the Council of State consider the peace process now to be irreversible". (*S/PV.3624, p. 2*)

Now, four months later, there has been no tangible progress, and we are meeting once again in a public meeting of the Security Council to continue the search for a peaceful way to break the deadlock gripping the Liberian factions and to put an end to the recent cease-fire violations that have caused many civilian deaths. Guinea Bissau is firmly convinced that the Liberian people, like other peoples, deserves to live in peace, and that it has the right to raise its children in conditions of peace and security.

My delegation believes that the only solution of the Liberian conflict is a political one. In that context, we urgently appeal anew to all the Liberian parties to respect the Abuja Agreement, and call on the faction chiefs to cooperate with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and UNOMIL to implement that agreement.

Despite the tragic events that are continuing in Liberia and the resulting delays in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, we share the Secretary-General's view that the United Nations and the international community must remain dedicated to the Liberian peace process, and that UNOMIL has a very important role to play in that regard.

In the same spirit, we call upon the international community to give ECOMOG logistical, financial and other assistance to enable it to fulfil its mandate, including for the disarmament of the Liberian factions and for the adoption of confidence-building and security measures. At the same time we believe that all Liberian factions must strictly respect the status of the personnel of ECOMOG, UNOMIL and humanitarian organizations, so that they can continue to deliver humanitarian assistance to all countries concerned, and in particular to refugees and displaced persons.

Guinea Bissau welcomed the 7 May meeting of ECOWAS Foreign Ministers on the question of Liberia. We note with satisfaction that the members of the Council of State indicated that they would respect the recommendations adopted at that meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the West African subregion. Similarly, we hope that the ECOWAS summit planned for the beginning of August will take important decisions with the participation of the leaders of all the Liberian factions.

We also hail the Government of the United States for its initiative to set up an international contact group on Liberia.

My delegation considers that in the final analysis it is the Liberian people, and especially their leaders, who bear the responsibility to achieve peace and national reconciliation. Moreover, we call upon all States to abide strictly by the embargo on all shipments of weapons and matériel to Liberia established by resolution 788 (1992).

I wish to convey my thanks to the Secretary-General for his efforts to lead the Liberians to national reconciliation. I wish also to thank the personnel of UNOMIL, ECOMOG and humanitarian organizations for their tireless efforts to put an end to the suffering of the Liberian people.

My delegation reiterates its support for the Secretary-General's recommendation that the mandate of UNOMIL be extended for a further period of three months.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

The conflict in Liberia has been going on for six years. This conflict in western Africa has not only taken many lives and caused tremendous damage to the property of the Liberian people, but also poses a direct threat to peace and stability in neighbouring countries and in the region as a whole.

Over the years, the members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have made unremitting efforts to end the fighting in Liberia despite their own economic difficulties. They have sent peace-keeping forces to Liberia in accordance with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. They have also offered good offices and mediation to find a solution acceptable to all parties, with a view to facilitating the peaceful settlement of the Liberian question. The United Nations and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) have also made great efforts to that end.

At one point these peace efforts were achieving some success. However, we have noted from the recent report by the Secretary-General that since early last month the situation in Liberia has further deteriorated, that conflict between various parties has continued and that Monrovia has almost become a dead city. This has seriously endangered the implementation of the Abuja Agreement and has made it hard for the general elections

scheduled for this August to proceed on time. For lack of resources and manpower, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is no longer able to provide safety guarantees to UNOMIL. We are deeply concerned about these developments.

The Liberian peace process is now at a critical moment. Foreign Ministers of nine ECOWAS countries reaffirmed at their recent meeting at Accra that the Abuja Agreement remained the only basis for the promotion of peace in Liberia. We fully support their decisions and strongly urge the parties to the conflict in Liberia to stop all hostilities immediately and cooperate with the United Nations and ECOWAS by strictly observing the agreements already reached and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and by working for the restoration of peace.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out, UNOMIL has played an important role in assisting ECOWAS to resume the peace process in Liberia. Together with ECOMOG, it can also promote the adoption of confidence-building measures, thus creating favourable conditions for the implementation of the Abuja Agreement. Therefore, we support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the mandate of UNOMIL be extended for three months.

We are of the view that the final settlement of the Liberian question depends solely on the Liberian people themselves. Only when the parties concerned truly lay down their arms and engage in patient and sincere negotiations and dialogue can there be a political solution acceptable to all parties; only then can the Liberian people enjoy peace again and set out on the road of reconstruction and development.

Africa occupies an important position in the world and represents an important force in the international political arena. The African people, with a peace-loving and progress-seeking tradition, have always been a main force in maintaining world peace and stability. Global peace and prosperity are out of the question without stability and development in Africa. At present, the situation in Africa is, on the whole, moving towards stability, and its economy is beginning to improve. However, many countries are still plagued by civil strife, which has not only endangered stability and security in these countries and their neighbours, but has also hampered their development.

The Chinese Government has consistently held that a stable and growing Africa is an indispensable and important part of a peaceful and prosperous world. The international community is duty-bound to take effective measures to help its people end the fighting and to find a political solution to their conflicts. We hope that Liberia, with the assistance of the international community, will end its conflict and achieve peace and stability at an early date. China will work together with the international community to this end.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker is the representative of Nigeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Gambari (Nigeria): Permit me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council during the month of May. We are assured that the Council's business is already in wise, cautious and impartial hands. Let me also seize this opportunity to thank Ambassador Somavía, Permanent Representative of Chile, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the affairs of the Council during his presidency.

My delegation is grateful to you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the situation in Liberia. We have read with keen interest the Secretary-General's latest report on the situation. We find it comprehensive and instructive.

After a period of relative peace and stability, during which we witnessed a partial resumption of normal life in Monrovia and in many other parts of Liberia, the peace process in that country has once again suffered a major setback as a result of renewed factional fighting among the warring parties. Although this turn of events is very unfortunate, it was not totally unexpected, as the developments that led to it were evident. Indeed, the Secretary-General had predicted this development in his report of 1 April 1996, a few days before the outbreak of the ensuing fighting.

We are witnessing a descent into chaos and confusion in Liberia. However, this Council should dispel any confusion regarding the cause of and the solution for the present debacle in that country. Most of the gains, albeit tentative, that were registered in the peace process in Liberia — including the improved humanitarian situation and the prospects for the voluntary return of refugees — have suffered serious reverses as a result of the recent outbreak of fighting in the country. The factional leaders are to blame for the fighting, which was a breach of the obligations which they freely entered into under the Abuja Agreement. In this respect my delegation agrees with the observation of the Secretary-General that the faction leaders have clearly demonstrated their total disregard for the welfare, peace and aspirations of the

Liberian people. It could equally be said however, that if the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) had perhaps been provided with the requisite resources and support the dangerous lull that occurred between the cease-fire following the Abuja Agreement and the start-up phase of disarmament and demobilization could have been avoided. Clearly, the initial momentum towards peace generated by the Abuja Agreement was lost and allowed to fizzle out.

During their meeting in Accra on 7 May 1996 the ECOWAS Foreign Ministers approved a sweeping plan aimed at helping to return Liberia to the Abuja Agreement by outlining measures to demilitarize Monrovia and to restore the cease-fire, as well as the fractured Liberian Transitional Government. The Foreign Ministers also warned the faction leaders that if they did not implement those steps ECOMOG would reconsider its involvement in Liberia at the August ECOWAS meeting. My country, along with other troop contributors to ECOMOG, will seriously consider our option at that time. We hope that the Liberian parties will demonstrate their desire for peace, which they have so far failed to do, miserably; otherwise, the spectre of Somalia, which the Secretary-General referred to, is a frightening possibility.

It is important to state that ECOMOG is part of the solution, and not part of the problem, in Liberia. It is therefore unfortunate to observe continuous sniping about its activities. Sometimes veiled — and sometimes not too veiled — criticisms are levelled in some quarters against the conduct of its troops. While we should not condone any misconduct on their part, the international community should not too easily forget why ECOMOG became necessary in the first place. May I remind the Council that in 1990, at the time of the Gulf crisis, the carnage in Liberia never got onto the international agenda and did not enjoy any serious coverage in the international media because of the more visible and ongoing "Operation Desert Shield". This was, of course, due to the strategic interest involved in that war. In the circumstances, when no other country was willing to lend a hand to stop the carnage and prevent the drift into anarchy in Liberia, the leaders of West Africa, in a bold and imaginative step, did what they thought best, not minding the costs to their respective countries. They deserve praise and gratitude, rather than criticism, from the international community. My own country, Nigeria, has spent billions of dollars, while hundreds of our soldiers have paid the supreme sacrifice and thousands of others have been wounded, all for the cause of peace in Liberia.

Furthermore, some observers have wondered why ECOMOG did not take immediate action to quell the recent fighting in Liberia, as it had done in the past, particularly during a coup attempt in September 1994. We know the reason why, and the Secretary-General clearly noted the reason in his report. Put simply, the resources necessary to sustain a credible and robust force capable of deterring such fighting over a long period were not available to the countries of the subregion.

This is not to say that ECOMOG's structure and organization cannot be improved upon. But there is a slant to the notion of restructuring ECOMOG which my delegation finds worrisome and perhaps misplaced. The proper objective should be to put in place a credible force able to carry out its difficult but essential mandate. In the circumstances, my delegation welcomes all well- meaning efforts to help equip and fortify ECOMOG in order to enhance its capability to carry out its assignment. And as the ECOWAS Foreign Ministers stressed at their 7 May meeting, any financial contributions for ECOMOG should be directed to the force as a whole and not to particular contingents. We cannot play "divide and rule" and yet pretend to seek an integral solution to the Liberian problem.

Furthermore, those countries which pay lip service to peace in Liberia, but from which deadly arms continue to flow to the warring factions in that country, should now live up to their obligations to Security Council resolution 985 (1995) and strictly observe the arms embargo imposed on Liberia.

In conclusion, let me say that my delegation is encouraged by the constructive attitude and posture of many delegations which have spoken today. The clear message we have retained is that no one is talking of abandoning Liberia. The commitment to the people of Liberia — and to the subregion as a whole — is welcome and very much appreciated. We are also confident that the Security Council will renew the mandate of UNOMIL along the lines of the Secretary-General's recommendation for another three months. We in the region, and I am speaking specifically for my Government, are prepared to continue to play our part until peace returns to Liberia and to our subregion.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Nigeria for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Algeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to extend to you, Sir, the sincere congratulations of the Algerian delegation on your

assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We are convinced that, under your enlightened guidance, the Council will succeed in promoting peace and security throughout the world.

The Algerian delegation would also like to thank you for having convened this public debate on the situation in a brotherly African country. I wish to praise this initiative, which allows Member States to express their opinions on the tragedy of Liberia and on the report of the Secretary-General, dated 21 May 1996, on recent events in Liberia, before the report is even considered by the Council. At a time when discussions are taking place on reform of the Organization's working methods to ensure transparency and greater efficiency in its deliberations and consideration of questions relating to international peace and security, we hope that this praiseworthy initiative, which deserves to be encouraged, will open the way to other initiatives for strengthening dynamic and necessary dialogue, thus guaranteeing the legitimacy and implementation of the Council's resolutions.

I also wish to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Somavía, Permanent Representative of Chile, for the efforts he made and results he obtained during his presidency of the Council last month.

The international community welcomed the signing of the Abuja Agreement last August by the Liberian factions. This Agreement established for the first time a real opportunity to end the devastating war and to create conditions for overcoming the political crisis that has led to a cycle of violence and fighting, the price for which is always paid by the people. The establishment by the Council of State of the collective presidency, composed of the leaders of all the political factions representing civil society, coincided with a regional and international determination to put an end to the conflict, rebuild the country and normalize the situation within the framework of a timetable giving priority to demobilizing the factions and integrating them into civilian life.

If this critical and decisive stage in the peace process was to succeed, political will and adequate international political, financial and logistical support were needed to energize and make irreversible the peace process, which was initiated through strenuous regional and international efforts. It was therefore appropriate to work to increase confidence among the political partners who had been fighting each other for more than six years. Hence, stress was laid on the need to support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as an essential and determining element entrusted with monitoring the implementation of the Abuja Agreement.

International support was long in coming, but this in itself cannot explain the deterioration of the situation over the past few months. The prevarications of the Liberian factions in respecting and implementing their commitments compromised the credibility of the peace process and led to increased tension, bloody confrontations and the recent eruption of the situation.

The most recent developments came as no surprise. Indeed, in his latest reports, the Secretary-General warned of the deterioration of the security situation in the country. Similarly, at its 63rd session, in Addis Ababa last February, the Organization of African Unity warned of the volatility of the situation and stressed the need for financial support for the ECOWAS peace-keeping mission to accomplish its task of monitoring the implementation of the Abuja Agreement.

Unfortunately, recent events have demonstrated the fragility of the peace process and totally undercut all the great and arduous efforts made by the United Nations in cooperation with the West African States.

In his latest report, the Secretary-General listed the necessary conditions for a serious response to the crisis in Liberia, foremost among which is scrupulous respect by all Liberian factions of the Abuja Agreement, which remains a valid framework for settling this crisis.

Recent developments in the situation have shown that the serious cooperation in good faith by the faction leaders is a *sine qua non* for the success of the regional and international efforts. The Economic Community of West African States has undertaken diplomatic efforts and invested sorely needed financial resources to establish peace and ensure the return to normal life so desired by the Liberian people. Hence, the Liberian faction leaders must shoulder their responsibilities and act in a positive manner.

Moreover, lessons must be drawn from past experience if the peace process is to be reactivated in Liberia. Indeed, peace cannot be restored in Liberia unless the factional combatants are disarmed and reintegrated into civil life. Similarly, no political agreement will be viable without a strong regional and international presence and adequate economic assistance. In this respect, support for ECOMOG would appear necessary and urgent.

The crisis in Liberia represents a major challenge to the international community, given the complexity of the situation in that brotherly African country. Recent events are hardly encouraging to the regional and international efforts being made.

The disappointment of the Secretary-General over the behaviour of the Liberian faction leaders is also understandable. However, the international community cannot yield to despair, for it has a responsibility, both political and moral, and therefore must pursue its efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the people of Liberia, a people who are tired of war and wish to live in security and stability.

The acts of provocation, destruction and plundering of United Nations property in Liberia must not sap our collective determination to pursue our tasks there in the service of peace, to ensure a model of outstanding cooperation in peace-keeping between the United Nations and a regional organization. This is happening at a time when the States of West Africa, despite their limited resources, are setting an outstanding example by agreeing to make sacrifices for the general interest. In so doing, they are supported by the OAU, which has placed its political and moral authority alongside those West African Member States.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Algeria for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Ghana. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of office as the President of the Council this month. I also thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Council on the tragic developments in Liberia, as detailed in the report of the Secretary-General now under consideration.

My Government is naturally disturbed and disappointed by the recent resurgence of fighting and mayhem in Monrovia. We had hoped that after the series of mediation talks, culminating in the Abuja Agreement of 19 August 1995, the faction leaders in Liberia would rededicate themselves to the objectives of peace and return their country to normalcy, in the interest of their people. It is therefore with great sadness that I agree with the Secretary-General's observation in his report that by the events of the last few weeks the faction leaders have clearly demonstrated their disregard for the aspirations of the Liberian people for peace and have shown wanton disrespect for the international community.

On assuming office as Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1994, His Excellency Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana, lost no time in taking up energetically the search for peace in Liberia. Following earlier efforts by his predecessors in the ECOWAS chair, success finally came with the signing in August 1995 of the Abuja Agreement to supplement the Cotonou and Akosombo Agreements, as subsequently clarified by the Accra Agreement.

The Abuja Agreement had political and military aspects, encompassing a wide array of activities that would lead, through disarmament of the factions, to free and fair elections in August 1996. In keeping with the schedule of implementation, the cessation of hostilities came into effect during the night of 26/27 August 1995, paving the way for the installation of a new Council of State on 1 September 1995 and subsequent appointments to the Cabinet and other high offices of State.

Even though there was some delay, caused by the lack of logistical support for the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the peace process took off on the right track. However, certain actions of the Council and faction leaders soon started to undermine the Abuja Agreement. Among these was a change of status of the Council of State to that of a collective presidency, creating a situation where Liberia virtually had six Presidents, each availing himself of the full trappings of presidential protocol.

Other problems arose, which I need not recount for lack of time. Efforts continued to address these, and in mid-December 1995, while still faced with serious personnel and logistical constraints, ECOMOG started the first phase of deployment in some cities held by the various factions. The initial success was, however, short-lived, when ECOMOG suffered an unprovoked surprise massive attack by one of the factions on 28 December 1995.

This senseless attack against ECOMOG and innocent civilians was covered by the Secretary-General's report of 23 January 1996, and was condemned by this Council.

In spite of these setbacks, and with little material support from the international community, ECOWAS and ECOMOG persevered, taking casualties on the way. We continued to give to the brotherly people of Liberia the best of our resources and the lives of our most gallant sons, in the hope that a return of peace to that country would strengthen peace in the whole subregion, and thereby international peace and security in general.

Regrettably, despite these efforts and sacrifices, the Liberian conflict escalated into fighting in Monrovia, a safe haven, on 6 April 1996, following an internal rift in the ULIMO-J faction, the reported deposition of its

leader, General Roosevelt Johnson, and a subsequent order by the Council of State for his arrest for murder.

At the outbreak of the fighting in Monrovia, His Excellency the President of Ghana, in his capacity as Chairman of ECOWAS, took immediate steps to contain the situation. He dispatched personal envoys for urgent consultations with key ECOWAS partners and for talks with the parties to the conflict. After strenuous efforts, the envoys obtained the agreement of the Liberian parties to lines of action aimed at restoring the Abuja Agreement, through a cease-fire, the redeployment of ECOMOG for security throughout Monrovia, the withdrawal of all armed fighters from the city, and the release of hostages. The ECOWAS Chairman's efforts culminated on 7 May 1996 in the seventh meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia, in Accra.

After intensive deliberations, the Ministers concluded that the Abuja Agreement remained the best framework for peace in Liberia and that ECOMOG should continue its efforts to seek its implementation. They emphasized the fact that the ultimate responsibility for peace rests with Liberians themselves, notably the Government and faction leaders, who need to demonstrate in specific terms their commitment to implement the Abuja Agreement and their commitment to peace in their country.

In pursuit of this objective, the Ministers established a Mechanism for Returning Liberia to the Abuja Agreement, which, if implemented by the Transitional Government during the coming three months, would demonstrate convincingly their continued attachment to the peace process. The Mechanism, copies of which have been made available for the attention of this Council, requires the Liberian parties to take steps that would, among other things, restore the cease-fire, restore Monrovia to its safe-haven status and return looted property. It would ensure reconciliation and inclusiveness of the National Transitional Government, a return to the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants and, most importantly, a return to the programme of democratization that would lead to free and fair elections. Implementation of the Mechanism will be closely monitored by the Committee of Nine, which will assess from it the commitment of the Liberian people to peace and report thereon to the ECOWAS Summit in August 1996.

The ECOWAS Ministers also reiterated what has been said time and again, that the task of ensuring international peace and security is primarily that of the United Nations Security Council and the entire international community. Regional or subregional initiatives can only complement, but not substitute for, the international community's own efforts. Here, we wish to re-echo the call of the Committee of Nine on the international community to assume its rightful duty to Liberia and assist ECOMOG accordingly. Liberia should be given the same assistance and attention as are accorded other conflict situations in the world.

With our meagre resources, despite the casualties suffered, we in West Africa have decided to give Liberians yet another chance to put their house in order. The international community cannot turn its back on that country. We have offered what we can, but the task facing ECOMOG is not one that can be shouldered by the region alone.

The Security Council is aware that under the Abuja and related Agreements the tasks of ECOMOG include the deployment of its personnel throughout Liberia, the sealing of all Liberia's borders, the manning of all sea, land and air borders, the encampment and disarmament of combatants, and the establishment of road and confidence patrols, to create an atmosphere conducive to the holding of free and fair elections.

These are no mean tasks. They require adequate military manpower, material and other logistic support. That is why we have repeatedly called on the international community to provide adequate assistance to ECOMOG.

ECOMOG, as constituted at present, has neither the required number of personnel nor the logistic base to effectively implement its mandate. Whereas only 8,500 troops are currently on the ground, the ECOMOG Commander has estimated that between 12,000 and 14,000 troops are required in order to be effective. The difference has to be made up. In the volatile atmosphere prevalent in the country, ECOMOG needs to be strengthened with more personnel, and logistic and financial resources, to become a credible force that can be a threat to intransigent parties, inspire the respect of the combatants and infuse confidence in the people of Liberia. Without such a force, our personnel will continue to be thinly spread on the ground and remain easy targets of power-hungry warlords, with consequences desired by none of us here, as seen in the recent past.

The time for this Council to act is now, to secure unconditional logistic and financial support for ECOMOG, coupled with humanitarian and development assistance to Liberia, to get the job done. Time is not on our side. A solution now will be cheaper, in terms of lives and material resources, than it will be tomorrow, after ECOMOG is compelled to withdraw as a result of inaction by the international community.

Among other measures it may decide upon, this Council may wish to call on the donor countries that made pledges for the peace process in Liberia at the United Nations-sponsored Conference on Liberia in New York in October 1995 to redeem their pledges now. The Council may also renew its call for strict compliance with its resolution on an arms embargo in relation to Liberia.

At this juncture, I wish to express our gratitude to Governments of Member States which have given or pledged assistance so far to ECOMOG and the Liberian peace process. We are particularly grateful to the United States Government, not only for its keen interest in the Liberian problem, but also for its humanitarian intervention during the recent crisis, the recent offer of $30 million to ECOMOG and the welcome initiative to establish an International Contact Group on Liberia. We also thank the other members of the Contact Group for their continued interest, and hope that through their work, much-needed material support will be forthcoming from the international community — and in good time — to facilitate the fulfilment of our common objective: to return peace to Liberia.

While the assistance received so far is deeply appreciated, it is nevertheless grossly inadequate to meet the logistic and other challenges faced by ECOMOG. We therefore hope that all Member States will review their contributions with the aim of augmenting them to a level commensurate with the goals we wish to see ECOMOG achieve, and without conditionalities.

The humanitarian consequences of the recent events in Liberia also need to be kept in sight. The international community must give more aid to countries like mine, which have been constrained to grant asylum to additional Liberian refugees fleeing their devastated country.

I wish before yielding the floor to express the gratitude of my Government and that of the Chairman of ECOWAS to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his unrelenting support for Liberia. We are also grateful to UNOMIL and to the Special Representative and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General, whose cooperation and encouragement has seen us thus far.

We support the Secretary-General's recommendation on the extension of UNOMIL's mandate, as a step in the right direction, and hope it will be given favourable consideration.

Finally, I hope that the outcome of the Council's deliberation will go one step further than previous resolutions and provide for urgently required concrete financial and logistic assistance to ECOMOG, to salvage the Liberian peace process in support of the suffering people of Liberia.

The President *(interpretation from Chinese)*: I thank the representative of Ghana for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Zimbabwe. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mapurunga (Zimbabwe): Mr. President, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to express my delegation's satisfaction with the manner in which you have steered the work of the Council since the beginning of this month. We look forward to your continued able stewardship in the days that remain.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his most revealing report on the situation in Liberia.

As a country that has followed developments in Liberia with concern and a keen interest, Zimbabwe, like other nations of the world, shared the optimism which we all had at the end of last year and the beginning of this year. Regrettably, and deeply so, as we meet today we are witnessing dangerous developments which not only erode all the past gains, our gains, but also threaten to stifle the fragile peace process in Liberia. Signs abound that the faction leaders in Liberia have, once again, yielded to narrow personal and factional interests at the expense and to the detriment of the achievable goals of national unity and peace.

The bold strides taken by Liberia's faction leaders at the signing of the Abuja Agreement, in Nigeria, and in the early implementation of that Agreement are ample evidence to us that peace is indeed achievable in that country, and that the peace-loving people of that country cannot wait any longer. We therefore call upon all the faction leaders to discard all vain pursuit of self-aggrandizement, rise to the occasion and to the expectations of the people of Liberia and the international community at large, and preoccupy themselves fully and solely with the search for peace and national unity. The leadership in Liberia should desist from creating a culture of hopelessness and purposelessness in their country, which could plunge their people irretrievably into a self-perpetuating cycle of hatred, violence and disorder.

Zimbabwe fully supports the Mechanism for Returning Liberia to the Abuja Agreement, which was adopted by Foreign Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on 7 May 1996 at Accra. In this regard, we call upon the

Liberian factions to move with haste and restore the cease-fire; to withdraw from Monrovia and allow the unimpeded deployment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) there; to remove arms from Monrovia and restore the capital to its status as a safe haven; to guarantee freedom of movement for civilians; to return weapons taken from ECOMOG and vehicles and equipment looted from the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations; and to reactivate the cease-fire violations Committee.

Much as we are aware that the responsibility for peace in Liberia lies ultimately with the people of Liberia themselves, we are also deeply conscious of the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in the quest for international peace and security. We most sincerely applaud the peoples and Governments of West Africa which have, for a prolonged period of six years now, sacrificed themselves and their meagre resources in coming to the aid of their neighbours in Liberia.

Surely the international community has no grounds to claim that it has done its best or exhausted all possible options on Liberia, for massive deployments in trouble spots in other regions of the world bear ample testimony to both the capacity and the capability of the international community to act resolutely in the interest of world peace and security. The minimalist approach of the United Nations on Liberia so far is very disquieting. We are further amazed at suggestions to the effect that UNOMIL's continued involvement might be contingent upon ECOMOG's continued presence in Liberia.

We wish to reiterate that when regions or regional organizations come up with peace initiatives to arrest dangerous threats to peace and security they should of necessity receive the active, all-round support of the international community through the United Nations. In our view, that is what Chapter VIII of the Charter is all about. Rather than playing the role of substitute for the uniquely mandated role of the United Nations, these regional efforts should be viewed and treated as facilitators in the United Nations own efforts in pursuit of its Charter-enshrined responsibility to maintain international peace and security. The United Nations has not taken full advantage of historic milestones in the peace process, such as the signing of the Abuja Agreement. One is certainly tempted to conclude that Liberia's woes are to some extent thriving on the international community's omissions and default.

The situation that prevails in Liberia right now requires that ECOMOG virtually double its force strength in order for it to deploy nation-wide, as the representative of Ghana has stated, and to man all borders — air, land and sea. The scope of the Liberian problem clearly goes beyond the national and regional dimensions. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to give the necessary financial and logistical support to facilitate adequate and effective deployment. We therefore call upon the international community to come to the rescue of the people of Liberia in this, their hour of need.

We appreciate the continued efforts of the Secretary-General through his Special Envoy and his Special Representative, as well as those of the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity. We hail and support their continued use of UNOMIL's good offices, in close consultation with ECOWAS, to promote confidence-building measures and facilitate the resumption of the peace process.

We are deeply concerned that the recent outbreak of hostilities has disrupted not only the flow of relief supplies to civilians, but also the relatively advanced efforts to restore some sections of the country to self-sufficiency. We therefore welcome the three-month contingency plan adopted by the Liberian authorities, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations as a basis for an appeal to support the delivery of relief services. In this regard, we also call upon the international community to continue giving humanitarian assistance to the people of Liberia, including the refugees and those who are internally displaced.

Finally, my delegation strongly supports the extension of the mandate of UNOMIL for at least the next three months, as recommended by the Secretary-General.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Zimbabwe for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Zambia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): Let me start by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May and, of course, for the most skilful manner in which you have conducted the work of the Security Council this month.

We thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his lucid report to the Council, contained in document S/1996/362 of 21 May 1996, on

the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). From this report it is clear that the eruption of brutal hostilities on 6 April 1996 in Monrovia only served to exacerbate the disintegration of Government authority and the breakdown of political and civil order in Liberia. The escalation of hostilities, the killings, the taking of hostages, and the ransacking and looting of United Nations and other properties were a clear indication that there is in Liberia a state of anarchy and lawlessness on an unprecedented scale.

As if such anarchy and lawlessness were not enough, there has also been a stalemate in the factional fighting in Liberia. This situation has in turn led to intolerable polarization in that war-torn country, further traumatizing the innocent people of Liberia. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians have been needlessly killed since the onset of the civil war in Liberia. More people continue to die as anarchy and confusion take hold in the country. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. The killings must stop. Liberians, like any other people in the world, are entitled to peace and security. All those concerned — faction leaders, regional leaders and the international community — must pool their efforts to ensure that Liberia returns to peace and stability.

The civil strife in Liberia has not only affected the people of that country; the conflict has had grave ramifications for the peace and tranquillity of the subregion. The spillover effect of the conflict has manifested itself in the flight of refugees and displaced persons into neighbouring States. This means that Liberia's neighbours have been just as harshly affected by the Liberian crisis as the Liberians themselves. The economies of Liberia's neighbours continue to suffer a major strain. As long as there is no end to the crisis in sight, neighbouring countries will also continue to suffer. Peace and security in Liberia are therefore integral to peace and security in the entire subregion.

All these factors make it imperative that Liberia return to normalcy after years of factional fighting. The onus is first on the Liberian factions to liberate themselves from their self-imprisonment in factional fighting and embrace the Abuja peace process. The time has come for all factional leaders to break with the tortured past. The situation now calls for a commitment on the part of all factions concerned to rise above selfish interests and ensure that they resolve their disputes by peaceful means. This, after all, is provided for under the Abuja Agreement, which defines the transitional arrangements and processes. The Abuja Agreement is the cornerstone of Liberia's national survival plan. The key to the peaceful resolution of the problems of Liberia lies in a return to the Abuja accords.

In this connection, my delegation fully supports the outcome of the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which adopted the Mechanism for Returning Liberia to the Abuja Agreement. The Ministers reaffirmed the Agreement as the only basis for peace in Liberia and agreed on a number of conditions to be fulfilled by the Liberian factions.

The time has come for all Liberian factions to challenge themselves by fulfilling the conditions set forth by ECOWAS and abiding by the provisions of the Abuja Agreement. Both the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), are likely to disengage themselves from Liberia if no progress is made towards the fulfilment of the provisions of the Abuja Agreement. Such a disengagement would plunge Liberia into a state of unmitigated anarchy and confusion. It should therefore be avoided at any cost. It is in the interest of all military factions and all Liberians to ensure the continuing presence of ECOMOG and UNOMIL to assist the process of Liberia's transition from a state of internal conflict to a state of internal peace and security.

In this respect, it is fitting to demand that faction leaders create the conditions that would enable the Liberian people to choose their own leaders through free and fair elections.

My delegation welcomes the initiative of the Government of the United States of America in establishing the International Contact Group on Liberia, which held its first meeting last month in Geneva and its second meeting just last Friday. By bringing together key donor Governments, the United Nations, ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity and international agencies concerned with Liberia, the initiative shows that there is no lack of good will on the part of the international community to bring peace and stability to Liberia. However, such initiatives, well-meaning as they may be, will not bring peace to Liberia until the Liberians themselves join forces to return their country to peace and tranquillity, and until they resolve to address themselves seriously to the three issues critical to peace in Liberia. These relate to restoring security in Monrovia, reinforcing ECOMOG, and returning to the Abuja peace process.

For now, my delegation supports the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia for another three months, until 31 August 1996.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Zambia for the kind words he addressed to me.

There are no further speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

I take this opportunity to thank all present for their attention throughout what was a lengthy meeting.

The meeting rose at 2.25 p.m.